

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
HELD IN WASHINGTON, JANUARY 29, 1937.

The sixth meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts during the fiscal year 1937 was held in its office in the Navy Department Building on Friday, January 29, 1937. The following members were present:

Mr. Moore, Chairman,
Mr. Clarke,
Mr. Savage,
Mr. Borie,
Mr. Lamb,
Mr. Manship,
also H. P. Caemmerer,

Executive Secretary and Administrative Officer.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a. m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETINGS: The Minutes of the Meetings held December 12 and December 29, were approved.

2. LANDSCAPE PLAN FOR THE WHITE HOUSE GROUNDS: The Commission considered a landscape plan for the White House grounds submitted by the National Park Service. The plan had been submitted to Mr. Clarke, who reported as follows:

January 18, 1937.

Mr. H. P. Caemmerer
The Commission of Fine Arts
Navy Department Building
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Caemmerer:

White House Grounds

I have your letter and the attached prints showing the development of the White House Grounds. These plans were prepared in the office of Olmsted Brothers and are the same ones upon which I reported some time ago. I think that all the points that I raised in my report should be carefully reviewed by the Commission at its next meeting before any approval is given to proceed with the new work called for. These plans involve the elimination of the fountain on the east wing and construction of a new road at a

lower level in order to increase the number of cars which may approach this wing on occasions of large social functions. This change involves modification of the facade of the east wing.

Another change is the proposed tunnel from West Executive Avenue into the service court; still another is the redesign of the gardens south of the Executive Mansion.

I brought up the question in my report of the possible elimination of the road across the lawn between Treasury Place and State Place; also the possibility of eliminating the pool in the south lawn. These last two suggestions were concurred in by Mr. Hubbard and all these matters were discussed in my report to the Commission on the general subject of the improvement to the White House Grounds last year.

I cannot be in Washington on the 28th but will do my very best to attend the meeting with the National Capital Park and Planning Commission on the 29th. I have a stated meeting of the Board of Design of the World's Fair that day and if nothing in particular comes up with respect to work I am particularly interested in, I shall try to arrange to be in Washington especially concerning the work of the Jefferson Memorial and the National Gallery of Art.

Sincerely yours,
(Signed) Gilmore D. Clarke,

Attention was called to the letter sent by Mr. Clarke on the subject
March 2, 1936. (Exhibit A)

Captain Lock of the White House staff was present to consider the plans with the Commission, as was also Mr. C. Marshall Finnan, Superintendent of the National Capital Parks, and Mr. Malcolm Kirkpatrick, resident landscape architect of the National Park Service. Captain Lock said that the plan had been brought to the attention of the President, who had inspected it.

Captain Lock said the President did not favor removing the road which crosses the south side of the White House grounds; Captain Lock believed the road could be depressed.

Other features of the plan were considered and among them the fountain at the south end of the grounds. This fountain the members of the Commission felt

should be removed. Attention was also called to the two garden areas near the White House. The Commission asked that a grading plan for these gardens be submitted and Captain Lock said that he would see to it that this is done. He felt it desirable that a master plan for the White House Grounds be prepared for future guidance. At the present time there is only a small amount of money available to begin improvement of the grounds. Mr. Kirkpatrick pointed out that the landscape plan follows Mr. Olmsted's plan with only one or two minor changes. The Commission approved the plan.

3. MALL STREET-MARKING BRACKETS: Mr. Finnan submitted a revised design for the Mall street-marking brackets to be placed on the Mall light standards. The brackets will be about 11 feet from the ground or halfway up the lamp post. The design was worked out in cooperation with Mr. Gosling of the General Electric Company. The Commission inspected the design and approved it.

4. PAN AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION BUILDING: Mr. Borie reported having read in the Washington Post of that morning that at a meeting of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission held the day before it was voted to place the administration building of the Pan American Union in the triangle originally designated for it at 19th Street and Constitution Avenue. The Commission was pleased to hear this.

5. DELAWARE CENTENNIAL COIN: Under date of January 23, 1937, the following letter was received from the Acting Director of the Mint, submitting a photograph of the revised models for the Delaware Centennial Coin:

January 23, 1937.

Hon. Charles Moore, Chairman,
Commission of Fine Arts,
Navy Department Building,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

Reference is made to your letter of December 14th, in regard to the models for the Delaware Tercentenary Coin. Your letter suggested that the design of the church, as submitted by the sculptor, be changed so that the ridge line of the roof will not extend to the rear gable. It was further suggested that the line should break at the rear in a slant so as to produce a hip-roof effect. You further suggested that the date 1936, indicated at the top of the building on the original model, should be placed in the space over the words "Half Dollar".

This Bureau is today in receipt of a photograph of the altered model. It is being submitted for an expression of your opinion as to its artistic merits as it now appears.

Very truly yours,
(Signed) M. M. O'Reilly
Acting Director of the Mint.

The photograph had been submitted to Mr. Lawrie for advice and he reported that he considered the model satisfactory. The coin was designed by Carl L. Schmitz, sculptor. Mr. Borie noted that the sculptor had made the desired change in the roof line of the old historic church. The photograph was called to the attention of Mr. Manship, who inspected it and considered it satisfactory. The Commission thereupon approved the models in accordance with the photograph submitted and a report was sent to the Acting Director of the Mint.

(Exhibit B)

6. NEW ROCHELLE MEMORIAL COIN: Miss Gertrude Lathrop, sculptor, of Albany, New York, submitted a model for the obverse of the New Rochelle Memorial Coin with the following statement:

The design for the obverse of the New Rochelle coin was suggested by the quotation from John Pell's grant of New Rochelle in the year 1689,--"and paying unto the said John Pell his heirs and assignes Lords of the said Mannor of Pelham or to the Assigns of him or them or either of them as an Acknowledgment to the Lord of the said Mannor one fatte calfe on every fouer and twentyth day of June Yearly and Every Years forever (if demanded)". A calf is shown as it is being delivered in payment of this debt.

The city of New Rochelle was settled in the year 1688 by Huguenots from La Rochelle, France. It was incorporated in the year 1899.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART: The Commission met at the residence of Mr. Andrew Mellon where it viewed cabinet drawings submitted by Mr. John Russell Pope for the National Gallery of Art. Members of the Commission questioned the architect concerning important factors in the design. The Commission then informally agreed that the National Gallery should be located on the north side of the Mall centered upon Sixth Street, which should be closed. It was further agreed that the building should provide one exhibition floor with adequate ground floor storage and executive offices. Further the Commission agreed that the building should be of classic~~d~~ design.

At the joint meeting of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts in the afternoon, the plans were presented. The purpose of showing the plans at this meeting was to bring up the question of closing Sixth Street so as to make it possible to build the gallery. Mr. Delano, the Chairman, said that he regretted very much that Sixth Street would have to be closed, as do also several civic organizations in Washington. However, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission did not object to closing Sixth Street on the north side of the Mall to allow for the erection of the gallery. It was nevertheless the concensus of opinion that the building should, insofar as might later be determined, be kept within the building lines already established.

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The design for the reverse shows a modern interpretation of the old conventionalized form of the fleur-de-lys which has been the symbol of France since the year 1180, and appears on the shield of La Rochelle from which the settlers came, and also on the shield of the city of New Rochelle. New Rochelle was settled in 1688 by Huguenot refugees from La Rochelle, France.

Mr. Manship inspected the model and considered it very good. He made a few suggestions to Miss Lathrop on the art of making a medal. Upon his recommendation the Commission approved the model for the obverse.

Miss Lathrop said she understood that the obverse of a model designed by another sculptor had been approved but since she is making a new obverse she wants to make a new reverse. The Commission concurred in this. Accordingly Miss Lathrop said she desires to make a model showing a modern interpretation of the old conventionalized form of the Fleur de Lys. Miss Lathrop was informed that the Commission would meet in Washington on February 18, at which time the model for the reverse could be considered.

7. NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART: In accordance with an invitation received from Mr. Mellon the Commission called on him at his apartment at 1785 Massachusetts Avenue to inspect the drawings for the National Gallery of Art, designed by Mr. John Russell Pope, and to see some of the works of art Mr. Mellon has on exhibition in his apartment.

The Commission were in conference with Mr. Pope as to the plans. Mr. Eggers of his office was also present. Mr. Pope briefly explained the plans, saying that the building had been designed after very careful study of the location recommended along the Mall on the north side of Constitution Avenue between 7th and 4th Streets. It is understood that the George Washington Memorial site

between 6th and 7th Streets will be given up as the site for the National Gallery of Art. The National Gallery design conforms to the classical style of architecture adopted for the national capital by President Washington and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson. The building will have a length of 829 feet, is rectangular in shape with two wings at each end about 340 feet wide. The main entrance to the building will be from the Mall. Mr. Pope said there will be an entrance from the Constitution Avenue side, mainly for the convenience of the Director and the members of his staff. There will be only one exhibition floor, which can be partitioned off into large and small galleries. There will be a covered garden court in each wing. The plans provide for a pedimented portico on each side and the ends of the building with columns 50 feet high. There is to be a low dome over the main hall; the height to the top of the dome is 140 feet.

The members of the Commission expressed great interest in the plans and in general considered them to be satisfactory. Mr. Lamb felt that there was a monotony in the treatment of the facade. He did not favor having a portico on four sides of the building. Also objection was made to the dome, which it was thought would come into conflict with the Capitol. Mr. Pope said that the dome of the gallery would be distinctly subordinate to that of the Capitol. The Capitol dome would be 200+ feet higher than that of the gallery. In design the dome for the gallery was planned to be no higher than that of the National Museum, which is 140 feet high on the Mall side.

The suggestion of Mr. Borie was adopted that the Commission should heartily give its approval to the plans as presented, leaving details of the design to be settled at future meetings of the Commission. Mr. Moore was empowered to

send a letter endorsing the plans and expressing the thanks of the Commission to Mr. Mellon for his magnificent gift to the nation. (Exhibit C)

At the joint meeting of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts in the afternoon, the plans were presented and highly appreciated. The purpose of showing the plans at this meeting was to bring up the question of closing Sixth Street so as to make it possible to build the gallery in accordance with Mr. Pope's design. Mr. Delano, the Chairman, said that he regretted very much that Sixth Street would have to be closed as do also several civic organizations in Washington. However, Mr. Delano said he had talked with Mr. Mellon several times about the matter and it was made clear that unless Sixth Street is closed, the National Gallery would not be built in Washington. In the circumstances the National Capital Park and Planning Commission did not object to closing Sixth Street on the north side of the Mall to allow for the erection of the gallery.

8. PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE BRIDGE: The Commission at the joint meeting with the National Capital Park and Planning Commission considered a revised design of the steel girder bridge to be built across the Anacostia on Pennsylvania Avenue, S. E. Mr. E. L. Macdonald of the firm of engineers to build the bridge, presented the design, which had been recommended by the Commission of Fine Arts at the office of McKim, Mead and White on December 29. Mr. Macdonald said the design had been worked out in consultation with Mr. Lawrence White of McKim, Mead and White, consulting architects of the bridge, and with Mr. William Adams Delano, architectural member of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and they have approved the design. Mr. White had submitted the following statement in regard to the revised design:

January 22, 1937.

MEMORANDUM:

In accordance with Colonel Sultan's suggestion to the Art Commission, Mr. White and Mr. Macdonald of Parsons, Klapp, Brinckerhoff & Douglas, submitted the drawings of the plate girder scheme, revised in accordance with the criticisms of the Art Commission, to Mr. Wm. Adams Delano on January 20th, 1937. After considerable discussion, Mr. Delano agreed that the design was now satisfactory, although he still felt that it would be better to make the bottom chord of the girders straight instead of curved.

He approved the solid piers faced with granite, the treatment of the span over the Railroad tracks, the tapering of the piers, the exposed rockers, and the eight foot overhang of the sidewalks. It was explained to him that although the piers of the plate girder design would be at right angles to the center line of the Bridge, the piers of the brick and granite design, owing to the greater depth and shorter span, would be skewed parallel to the banks in order to provide wider openings for navigation. He expressed a preference for the plate girder design over the masonry design, which he criticized as being thin at the crown of the arches. Mr. Macdonald pointed out that the masonry design would cost about twice as much as the plate girder design, largely owing to the foundation condition.

The next morning Mr. White showed the drawings, and discussed the above prints with Mr. Moore in Washington. Mr. Moore expressed himself as being pleased with the changes, and expressed a doubt if the appropriation for the more expensive masonry scheme could be obtained.

Mr. White then submitted the drawings to Col. Sultan, who called in two Captains on his Staff, and all the above points were discussed. They were entirely satisfied with the design, and Mr. White left the plate girder blueprints with them. They requested that bids be taken for sandstone, as well as granite for the covering of the piers and abutments, in order to obtain better figures from the granite concerns. Mr. White suggested the local 'Aquia Creek' sandstone, which they said would be satisfactory.

Both Commissions regarded the design satisfactory and approved it.

Colonel Sultan, Engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia, said it would be impracticable to build the masonry bridge as they are required to

go down 70 feet for the piers and even then would not strike bedrock. This would mean that the masonry bridge would crack in a few years; furthermore it would cost \$2,500,000 whereas the steel bridge will cost \$1,500,000.

9. FORT SCOTT HOUSING PROJECT: Consideration was given to a complaint that the Federal Housing Bureau proposes to approve the erection of an apartment building on a 70-acre wooded area just southwest of Washington at Fort Scott in Oakcrest, Virginia. Chairman Delano said that the National Capital Park and Planning Commission has no authority to prevent them from building as this area comes under the jurisdiction of the Arlington County Board, but effort would be made to prevent approval of the project by the government agency, if this apartment is to be an encroachment on the landscape of the greater Washington area. He said there is no authority to extend the Fort Drive into Virginia.

10. NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES BUILDING: Mr. Caemmerer reported that Mr. Paul Brockett, Assistant Secretary of the National Academy of Sciences, has requested that the triangle immediately north of their building between 21st and 22nd streets be reserved for future expansion of the Academy. A map was inspected from which it was shown that in the proposed deflection of New York Avenue on account of the erection of the new War Department Building in the locality the triangle in question would be virtually abolished. Mr. Delano said that the National Academy of Sciences could enlarge its building to twice its original size on the square they now occupy.

11. NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMISSION: The Commission decided to hold its next meeting in Washington on Thursday, February 18, 1937.

The Commission adjourned at 5:00 p. m.

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS MAY 17, 1910

CHARLES MOORE, Chairman
EGERTON SWARTWOUT JOHN M. HOWELLS
GILMORE D. CLARKE EUGENE F. SAVAGE
LEE LAWRIE CHARLES A. COOLIDGE
H. P. CAEMMERER, Secretary

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY, NAVY DEPARTMENT BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D.C.

March 2, 1936

Mr. Charles Moore, Chairman
Commission of Fine Arts
Navy Building,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Moore:

At the request of the Commission, expressed at the last meeting, I have carefully reviewed a copy of the "Report to the President of the United States on improvements and policy of maintenance for the Executive Mansion Grounds", prepared by Olmsted Brothers and dated October 1935.

In the first place I want to compliment the authors of the report upon the completeness, the thoroughness, and the logic of the recommendations contained therein. Specific recommendations could not be made in each instance because of the fact that further study must be given certain problems, and in connection with at least two, more detailed study must be carried out in collaboration with an architect.

I believe that certain matters reported upon should be made the subject of further discussion before more detailed plans are prepared. These matters are taken up below and in the same order in which they appear in Olmsted Brothers' report.

I (b). Insufficiency of loading and unloading space for cars of visitors at the East Entrance.

The changes suggested involve major architectural revisions to the East wing. This entire subject must be studied as a single problem. It is known that the guests are seriously inconvenienced at times of large assemblages at the White House, but it appears that the changes suggested, in order to effect an improvement commensurate with the importance of the problem will require

EXHIBIT A

that careful study be given to the architectural problem as it affects the entire building. The fact that the White House is the residence of the President of the United States cannot be too strongly emphasized. That should be the first consideration with respect to any changes; the convenience of the arrangements for receiving guests must be of secondary importance.

I (c). Insufficiency of service yard space.

This recommendation is an excellent one particularly since it contemplates the construction of a service road with a view toward eliminating the necessity of having delivery trucks enter the grounds via the approach to the north entrance.

I (e). Defects of road system south of White House and conflict of functions.

I recommend going even further than the report suggests. It appears that all the required functions of approach to the south entrance can be adequately served by the single road extending from East Executive Avenue to the south entrance and thence to West Executive Avenue, thus eliminating the drive across the middle of the lawn with its connections to the main drive referred to above. (Portion of the drive suggested to be eliminated is shown on plan #2 colored in green.) The desirability of this commission is, from the aesthetic point of view, too obvious to necessitate further comment here.

II (d) 2. Paragraph top page 23.

The report calls for the removal of the fine group of magnolias at the southwest corner of the portico. Another solution to the problem of the garden areas south of the White House would be to duplicate this group at the southeast corner. These magnolias cannot be objected to upon the theory that they are not in character aesthetically. What objection can there be to obscuring all the south facade of the White House, except the portico, from the view of the public at the south end of the grounds? The framing of the portico by these magnolias is, to the writer, more pleasing than to show almost the entire south facade. To add another group at the south east corner to secure balance would, of course, be desirable and necessary if the existing group is to be kept. The magnolias perform a most valuable utilitarian function in that they aid materially in keeping the rays of the hot summer sun off part of the building and contribute to the comfort of the occupants of the Executive Mansion. Further than that,

March 2, 1936

these trees serve to segregate the garden outside the Executive Offices from the outer grounds and give privacy to that area, which seems to be desirable. A treatment of similar character with respect to the east garden would appear to be equally desirable.

II (e). Pool in South Lawn.

This pool seems to the writer to be a questionable addition in the South Lawn. It seems unfortunate to break the great stretch of quiet lawn by the intrusion of a formal pool. If it were practicable to provide an informal pond in this view it would appear to be more appropriate, but this seems to be impracticable. Water features might well be added to the gardens near the house where they may be viewed more intimately, leaving the large expanse of the South Lawn unencumbered and thereby possessive of greater restfulness.

I suggest that the Commission consider the opinions presented herewith, with a view toward approving the report together with such additional considerations or revisions as may appear to be appropriate and proper at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

GILMORE D. CLARKE
Landscape Architect, Member
Commission of Fine Arts

GDC:MA

C O P Y

January 30, 1937.

Dear Miss O'Reilly:

The Commission of Fine Arts, at their meeting on January 29, 1937, approved the models for the Delaware Tercentenary Coin, of which you submitted a photograph with your letter of January 23rd. The photograph is herewith returned.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Very respectfully, yours,

(Signed) Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Miss M. M. O'Reilly,
Acting Director of the Mint,
Treasury Department,
Washington, D. C.

EXHIBIT B

C O P Y

January 30, 1937.

Dear Mr. Mellon:

The plans for the National Gallery of Art prepared by Mr. John Russell Pope at your instance were examined and considered by the Commission of Fine Arts on January 29, 1937. These plans were unanimously approved by the Commission. The Commission advise that the building as planned is architecturally suited to house and to display to the public the collection of paintings and sculpture, gathered by you through the years. The collection includes many works of art that the civilized world has acclaimed as among the masterpieces of all time. And all of its many items belong to the highest category in the realm of the fine arts. In advising that the building as planned is suited to the function to be served this Commission cannot express greater commendation.

The site selected allies the National Gallery of Art to the Capitol group of buildings, while it is properly subordinate to them. The site is in the Mall, which now has been brought into its originally planned concept as the park connection between Capitol and White House. The gallery belongs to that class of public buildings in which the public primarily is interested, a feature of the Mall emphasized in the Plan of 1901. In size the building will be ample to provide for the adequate exhibition not

EXHIBIT C

only of the collections for which it is now to be constructed, but also for additions of corresponding excellence. In spaciousness, dignity and elegance it will compare favorably with those like structures in other lands where those three elements are combined.

In brief the gift you propose to make, in both contents and building, will give to the United States a high place in those arts of civilization on which the permanent satisfactions of its people and true greatness of a nation are founded.

All members of the Commission of Fine Arts have participated in the examination and approval of the plans: Gilmore D. Clarke, Eugene F. Savage, C. L. Borie, Jr., Henry R. Shepley, William F. Lamb, and Paul Manship.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Very respectfully, yours,

(Signed) Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Hon. Andrew W. Mellon,
1785 Massachusetts Avenue,
Washington, D. C.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART: The Commission met at the residence of Mr. Andrew Mellon where it viewed cabinet drawings submitted by Mr. John Russell Pope for the National Gallery of Art. Members of the Commission questioned the architect concerning important factors in the design. The Commission then informally agreed that the National Gallery should be located on the north side of the Mall centered upon Sixth Street, which should be closed. It was further agreed that the building should provide one exhibition floor with adequate ground floor storage and executive offices. Further the Commission agreed that the building should be of classical design.

At the joint meeting of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts in the afternoon, the plans were presented. The purpose of showing the plans at this meeting was to bring up the question of closing Sixth Street so as to make it possible to build the gallery. Mr. Delano, the Chairman, said that he regretted very much that Sixth Street would have to be closed, as do also several civic organizations in Washington. However, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission did not object to closing Sixth Street on the north side of the Mall to allow for the erection of the gallery. It was nevertheless the concensus of opinion that the building should, insofar as might later be determined, be kept within the building lines already established.

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Commission presented the architect's preliminary plan in
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opinion that the building should, insofar as might be practicable,
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